



Typology and Styles of Educational Leadership and Their Implementation in Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

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Educational leadership is a critical factor in determining program effectiveness, learning quality, and school culture, yet challenges like low management efficiency and weak educator collaboration persist. This study examines various educational leadership styles, typologies, and their practical implementation within educational institutions. Employing a qualitative library research methodology, data were gathered from diverse scientific literature sources, including books and journal articles, and analyzed using content analysis to understand leadership patterns deeply. The results identify five primary contemporary leadership styles: instructional, transformational, distributional, participatory, and adaptive-integrative. While each style possesses distinct characteristics and focuses, they collectively complement one another to support organizational effectiveness. This study concludes that the success of educational leadership depends heavily on the leader's ability to flexibly integrate these various styles according to institutional contexts and needs. Such strategic integration plays a crucial role in improving learning quality, strengthening professional collaboration, and supporting seamless adaptation to changes within the modern educational landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership plays a central role in determining the direction and quality of educational implementation within an institution (Ahmad and Ahmed 2023). However, in reality, many educational institutions still face various tangible obstacles, such as low teacher performance, weak organizational culture, and suboptimal student learning outcomes. These problems are frequently related to the inappropriate styles and typologies of leadership applied by leaders in managing available resources. Furthermore, there is also a tendency to utilize leadership styles that do not align with the institution's needs, such as leadership that is overly authoritarian or, conversely, too permissive, thereby impacting the ineffectiveness of educational institution management. This condition indicates that selecting and implementing the right leadership

style remains a distinct challenge for educational leaders in the field.

Various studies regarding educational leadership styles and typologies in Indonesia demonstrate that leadership plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of educational institutions. (Haryaka et al. 2026) *encouraging student motivation and engagement* explains that a principal's transformational leadership can improve educational quality by strengthening vision, motivation, and collaboration among school members. In line with this, (USI 2026) posits that a transformational leadership style contributes to increasing teacher motivation and work effectiveness through inspiring approaches and intellectual stimulation. Meanwhile, (RAMDHANI 2025) also confirms that transformational leadership exerts a significant influence on school organizational change, particularly in addressing the demands of educational globalization.

Based on the review above, there is a research gap requiring further investigation: a lack of studies integrating various educational leadership styles and typologies—as well as the intuitive aspects thereof—with practical implementation in educational institutions. In reality, however, educational leaders do not rely on a single leadership style; instead, they combine various approaches based on the specific situations and conditions they face (Zeng, Cheah, and Abdullah 2025). Therefore, this study argues that the effectiveness of educational leadership is largely determined by a leader's ability to adapt and integrate various leadership styles and typologies in a context-sensitive manner. A flexible, situational leadership approach is believed to enhance organizational performance, strengthen collaborative cultures, and foster innovation within the learning process. Thus, this study is significant not only for enriching the body of theory regarding educational leadership but also for providing practical guidance to leaders of educational institutions as they navigate increasingly complex challenges.

To fill this vacuum, this study introduces a novelty in the form of an integrative synthesis of five contemporary leadership styles (instructional, transformational, distributional, participatory, and adaptive-integrative) combined into a contextual model of practical implementation. This study presents a core argument that the effectiveness of educational leadership is not determined by the adoption of one absolute style, but rather by the leader's capacity and flexibility to adapt and integrate these various leadership typologies situationally. A flexible and situational leadership approach is believed to be capable of enhancing organizational performance, strengthening a collaborative culture, and fostering innovation within the learning process. Based on the background and the state of the art described above, the research questions of this article include: (1) what are the concepts and characteristics of educational leadership styles and typologies?; and (2) how are these leadership styles and typologies implemented within educational institutions? In alignment with these research questions, this study aims to comprehensively analyze educational leadership styles and typologies and examine their implementation in

institutional practice. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically – by enriching the treasury of Islamic education management science – and practically, as an adaptive guide for practitioners and leaders of educational institutions in navigating increasingly complex modern challenges.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using the library research method to comprehensively examine educational leadership styles, leadership typologies, and their implementation within educational institutions (Setiawan, Saleh, and Ritonga 2025). This approach was selected because it enables researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of leadership concepts through the systematic review of written sources without conducting direct fieldwork. The research data were collected from books, scholarly journal articles, and previous studies relevant to educational leadership, particularly those addressing leadership practices and their implementation in school settings. Data collection was carried out through documentation techniques, including reading, reviewing, recording, and identifying relevant information from various literature sources that aligned with the focus of the study (Haramain 2026). The collected data were subsequently analyzed using content analysis, in which the data were systematically classified into specific categories, interpreted to identify their underlying meanings, and synthesized to draw conclusions regarding the patterns of educational leadership styles and typologies. Through this analytical process, the researchers sought to integrate findings from previous studies in order to develop a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the implementation of educational leadership within the context of educational institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Educational Leadership Typologies and Their Implementation

Recent studies on educational leadership typologies reveal a significant shift from static models toward more dynamic, contextual, and integrative ones (Cheng 2024). Based on a review of recent literature – specifically (Iswadi 2025) work – educational leadership typologies can be understood through three main classifications: classical typologies (serving as the conceptual foundation), transformational-transactional typologies (reinforcing organizational functions), and adaptive-contextual typologies (responding to the complexities of modern educational challenges). These three classifications do not operate in isolation; rather, they complement one another in the practice of leadership within educational institutions. Classical leadership typologies – encompassing authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire styles – continue to serve as a fundamental framework for understanding leadership patterns (Mukin and Haris 2024). In an educational context, the authoritarian style is characterized by the principal's dominance in decision-making; while this can be effective in specific situations – such as emergencies or instances requiring firm policy enforcement – recent research indicates

that a predominant reliance on this style tends to stifle teacher participation and creativity. Conversely, the democratic style emphasizes the active involvement of the school community in decision-making processes. Implementing this style has been shown to enhance commitment, collaboration, and the quality of working relationships within the school environment. Meanwhile, the laissez-faire style grants teachers autonomy in performing their duties; while this can foster innovation under certain conditions, it also carries the risk of poor coordination if not balanced with adequate supervision (Nabitunafisah et al. 2026).

Although classical leadership typologies represent early concepts in leadership theory, these three styles remain relevant in educational practice today. However, they cannot be applied in isolation or rigidly. Principals, as educational leaders, must be capable of combining these typologies in ways that suit the specific situation and the organization's needs. For instance, an authoritarian style can be employed in emergencies, a democratic style for strategic decision-making, and a laissez-faire style to foster teacher creativity. Thus, while classical leadership typologies remain a vital foundation for understanding the dynamics of educational leadership, they need to be integrated with modern, contextual approaches to address increasingly complex educational challenges.

Transformational-Transactional Typology

The transformational-transactional typology is one of the most frequently used approaches to explain how a school principal or educational leader influences teacher performance and school organizational dynamics (Maheshwari 2022). Fundamentally, this typology describes two primary modes of leadership: through the transformation of values and motivation (transformational) and through a work-exchange system based on rewards and supervision (transactional). These two approaches do not operate in isolation; rather, they often coexist in leadership practice within educational institutions (Andreansyah and Muttaqien 2025). From a transformational perspective, a leader is viewed not merely as someone performing administrative functions, but as a driving force for change within the school environment. Principals who adopt this approach typically strive to establish a clear, shared vision and subsequently inspire teachers and educational staff to commit strongly to that vision. Numerous educational studies in Indonesia have demonstrated that transformational leadership enhances teacher work motivation, strengthens a collaborative culture, and fosters innovation in the teaching and learning process. This occurs because the leader does not simply issue instructions but also builds emotional connections and sets an example that boosts the trust and loyalty of subordinates (Suryanti 2025).

Furthermore, transformational leadership operates through intellectual stimulation, encouraging teachers to think creatively, devise novel solutions, and move beyond mere adherence to instructional routines (Saad Alessa 2021). In a school setting, this is evidenced by increased teacher participation in developing instructional methods and utilizing educational technology. Research in Indonesia indicates that transformational principals are generally more

successful in fostering learning environments that are innovative and adaptable to changing times (Umami and Wahyudi 2025). In contrast, transactional leadership places greater emphasis on formal, structured relationships between leaders and subordinates (Angkat et al. 2025). Under this model, teachers receive rewards for meeting specific targets, while facing consequences for failing to meet established standards. In school practice, this approach is widely applied in administrative management, performance assessment, and the monitoring of teacher discipline.

Although it may appear more rigid than transformational leadership, the transactional approach plays a vital role in maintaining order and stability within school organizations. Numerous studies in Indonesia indicate that transactional leadership is effective in ensuring that all school programs operate in accordance with established procedures and targets (Mof and Hermina 2024). However, if applied excessively, this style can diminish teachers' intrinsic motivation, as they become driven more by external factors—such as rewards and punishments—than by professional conscience. In actual educational practice, these two typologies rarely exist in isolation. An effective principal typically integrates both approaches depending on the situation. At times, a principal must adopt a transformational stance to establish a vision and drive cultural change within the school, while at other times, they must employ a transactional approach to ensure discipline and operational order. This combination demonstrates that educational leadership is dynamic and contextual rather than rigid or monolithic (Dholkawala 2023).

Adaptive-Contextual Typology

The adaptive-contextual leadership typology is a modern leadership approach emphasizing the ability of educational leaders to continuously adjust their strategies, behaviors, and decision-making in response to changing organizational situations and external environmental demands (Iswadi 2025). From this perspective, leadership is no longer understood as a set of rigid styles, but rather as a dynamic capacity that evolves through processes of learning, reflection, and social interaction within educational institutions. In Indonesian educational practice, adaptive leadership has emerged as a response to the complex challenges of 21st-century education—such as the digitalization of learning, curricular changes, and rising public expectations regarding school quality (Praekanata et al. 2024). Principals who adopt an adaptive approach function not merely as administrators but also as problem-solvers capable of rapidly assessing situations and determining strategic actions suited to actual conditions on the ground. Research indicates that adaptive leadership is highly effective in enhancing a school's ability to survive and thrive amidst rapid and uncertain change.

Furthermore, adaptive-contextual leadership emphasizes the importance of collective learning processes within the school organization (Hakim and Mu'id 2025). Leaders do not work in isolation; instead, they engage teachers, educational staff, and stakeholders in collaboratively understanding issues and formulating solutions. In many school settings, this approach is evident when

principals create opportunities for discussion, consultation, and shared reflection to address instructional challenges. This demonstrates that adaptive leadership is oriented not only toward outcomes but also toward the process of strengthening organizational capacity.

From a contextual perspective, this leadership approach emphasizes that every school possesses unique characteristics—whether in terms of resources, organizational culture, or the surrounding social environment (Yusuf 2025). Consequently, a leadership strategy that proves effective in one school cannot necessarily be applied in the same way in another. An adaptive principal must be capable of understanding the local context, including teacher work culture, student conditions, and support from the surrounding community (Langgai 2025). The implementation of adaptive leadership is also frequently linked to distributive and collaborative leadership, wherein leadership roles are not concentrated solely on the principal but are shared among various stakeholders within the school. This approach aims to strengthen overall organizational capacity and foster a sense of ownership regarding school policies. In this way, leadership becomes more participatory, responsive, and sustainable.

Thus, the adaptive-contextual leadership typology can be understood as the most relevant leadership model for navigating the dynamics of modern education. Leadership success is no longer determined by authority or formal structures, but rather by a leader's ability to adapt, collaborate, and engage in continuous learning alongside the entire school community.

Educational Leadership Styles and Their Implementation

In contemporary educational studies, the leadership of school principals is no longer viewed merely as an administrative role or a structural position within the school organization (Mincu 2022). Recent literature indicates that educational leadership is a dynamic process influencing school culture, the quality of instruction, and teachers' professional development. Consequently, leadership styles cannot be rigidly classified; rather, they are best understood through narrative classifications based on leadership orientations that are interconnected and complementary (Iswadi 2025). Modern approaches identify five educational leadership styles: Instructional, Transformational, Distributed, Participative, and Adaptive-Integrative. These five orientations illustrate how principals carry out their roles within increasingly complex school contexts, particularly in the era of digitalization and the globalization of education.

Instructional Leadership Style

In modern education, instructional leadership is understood as a leadership style that places the learning process at the core of all school activities (Raharjo 2023). Recent studies indicate that school principals no longer function merely as administrative managers but as instructional leaders actively involved in enhancing the quality of classroom teaching. They conduct academic supervision, observe teaching and learning processes, provide feedback to teachers, and ensure that lesson planning aligns with curriculum objectives. This approach is increasingly data-driven, with decisions regarding instructional

improvement based on student learning outcomes and teacher performance rather than mere intuition or established habits.

In practice, instructional leadership fosters a more collaborative relationship between principals and teachers (He, Guo, and Abazie 2024), as the primary focus is on professional development and the continuous improvement of learning quality. Teachers are not merely directed but are guided to enhance their teaching competencies. Consequently, schools that consistently implement instructional leadership tend to exhibit a stronger academic climate, more focused learning processes, and superior student learning outcomes. Recent research also confirms that the active involvement of principals in instructional matters is a key factor in improving the quality of education within schools (Mu'alimin, Muhith, and Hepni 2026).

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership in education is a leadership style that emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, transform, and mobilize all members of the school community toward a shared vision of continuous improvement (Kareem et al. 2023). In the school context, the principal serves not only as an administrative manager but also as a visionary leader who fosters collective awareness of the importance of change and educational quality enhancement. The principal cultivates teachers' intrinsic motivation through exemplary conduct, inspirational communication, and reinforcement of shared goals. Recent studies also associate transformational leadership with leaders' capacity to promote instructional innovation, particularly in responding to the challenges of the digital era and the rapid evolution of educational curricula (Sliwka et al. 2024).

In practice, transformational leadership is reflected in the principal's ability to establish a positive, collaborative, and professionally oriented school culture. Teachers are encouraged not only to perform their routine responsibilities but also to think creatively, reflectively, and innovatively in the teaching and learning process. The principal acts as both a motivator who inspires enthusiasm for change and a facilitator who supports the continuous professional development of teachers. Recent research indicates that this leadership style has a significant positive influence on teacher performance, organizational commitment, and the quality of student learning, as it strengthens both emotional and professional engagement within the school environment (Kareem, Patrick, and Prabakaran 2025).

Distributed Leadership Style

Distributed leadership in education is a leadership approach that emphasizes that leadership is not solely the responsibility of the principal but is collectively shared among all members of the school organization according to their roles and competencies (Nadeem 2024). From the perspective of recent studies, schools are viewed as complex systems that cannot be effectively managed by a single leader alone. Therefore, teachers, vice principals, program coordinators, and school development teams can all assume leadership roles

within their respective areas of expertise. In this model, the principal serves as a coordinator and facilitator who ensures that all stakeholders work collaboratively toward achieving the school's educational goals. This approach has been widely associated with improved organizational effectiveness, as it promotes active participation and a shared sense of ownership of school policies and decision-making processes (Dai, Thomas, and Rawolle 2025).

In practice, distributed leadership is reflected in collaborative decision-making, the delegation of leadership responsibilities based on expertise, and the distribution of accountability across multiple individuals rather than concentrating it in a single leader. Teachers are not merely implementers of school policies; they actively contribute to designing instructional programs, evaluating school policies, and leading initiatives within their areas of specialization. Recent research indicates that this leadership model enhances school organizational performance, strengthens teachers' professional capacity, and fosters a more collaborative and adaptive organizational culture. Consequently, distributed leadership has become increasingly relevant in modern educational settings, where flexibility, shared responsibility, and strong teamwork are essential for responding effectively to ongoing educational changes (Nurwahyuni and Triwiyanto 2025).

Participative Leadership Style

Participative leadership in education is a leadership model that positions the principal as a facilitator who encourages the active involvement of all members of the school community in the decision-making process. Under this approach, teachers, educational staff, and other relevant stakeholders are not merely responsible for implementing policies but also actively contribute ideas, insights, and solutions to various school-related issues. Decision-making is carried out through open communication and deliberative discussions, resulting in policies that are more democratic, transparent, and responsive to the actual needs of the school. Recent research in Indonesia indicates that the active involvement of school members in participative leadership improves the quality of decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives and fostering a stronger sense of ownership over the policies that are adopted (Ula and Ali 2025).

In practice, participative leadership is demonstrated through the principal's commitment to involving teachers in program planning meetings, instructional evaluations, and the development of school policies. Teachers are provided with opportunities to express their opinions and contribute to determining the strategic direction of school development, thereby fostering a more collaborative and harmonious working environment (Azmaniar et al. 2025). This leadership model has also been shown to enhance teachers' work motivation, organizational commitment, and overall job performance, as they feel valued and professionally engaged in the decision-making process. However, its successful implementation depends largely on the principal's ability to manage communication effectively, ensuring that participation remains well-coordinated and does not compromise the efficiency of decision-making.

Adaptive-Integrative Leadership Style

The adaptive-integrative leadership style in education is an approach that emphasizes the principal's ability to adapt to change while integrating various leadership styles according to the needs and circumstances of the school. In recent literature, particularly within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum and the digital era, this approach has become increasingly important. Adaptive leadership is understood as a leader's capacity to respond to rapid, complex, and unpredictable changes in a flexible, collaborative, and organizational learning-oriented manner. Rather than relying on a single leadership approach, school principals are expected to dynamically combine instructional, transformational, and participative leadership styles. This approach is particularly relevant because schools are continuously required to adapt to evolving educational policies, technological advancements, and the changing needs of students (Rachmawati 2025).

In practice, adaptive-integrative leadership is reflected in the principal's ability to foster a flexible organizational culture, encourage collaboration among teachers, and empower all available school resources to address educational challenges effectively. The principal serves not only as a change leader but also as a facilitator who ensures that decisions are made based on careful situational analysis and the actual needs of the school community. Furthermore, this leadership approach highlights the importance of collective reflection, organizational learning, and data-driven decision-making in educational management. Recent studies indicate that adaptive leadership enhances school management effectiveness, promotes instructional innovation, and creates a learning environment that is responsive to the demands of contemporary education and ongoing societal change (Sugiarto 2025).

In contemporary educational leadership studies, a principal's leadership style is no longer understood as a single, isolated approach, but rather as a combination of various complementary orientations tailored to the school's needs. The five leadership styles—namely instructional, transformational, distributed, participative, and adaptive-integrative—essentially describe distinct yet interconnected dimensions of effective school management. Instructional leadership emphasizes a focus on enhancing the quality of learning as the core essence of education, while transformational leadership centers on the principal's ability to build a vision, inspire, and drive school cultural change. On the other hand, distributed leadership demonstrates that leadership can be shared among various actors within the school, whereas participative leadership stresses the involvement of all school members in decision-making through consensus-building (musyawarah) and collaboration (Amri et al. 2025).

Meanwhile, adaptive-integrative leadership emerges as a more holistic approach, as it flexibly integrates all of these styles according to the specific situations and challenges faced by the school (Umar 2025). In practice, modern school principals are expected not only to manage administration but also to serve as instructional leaders, change agents, facilitators of collaboration, and adaptive decision-makers responsive to educational dynamics. Consequently,

these five leadership styles are not isolated concepts; rather, they form a cohesive unit that shapes an effective, responsive, and relevant educational leadership profile to navigate the complexities of the contemporary educational landscape.

Discussion

Educational leadership in the context of modern schools plays a highly strategic role in determining the direction of educational quality improvement. Various challenges encountered within schools, such as disparities in teacher performance, the dynamics of organizational culture, and the increasing demand to enhance student learning outcomes, are closely associated with how school principals implement their leadership styles. This review demonstrates that educational leadership can no longer be understood through a single perspective; rather, it has evolved into five major approaches: instructional, transformational, distributed, participative, and adaptive-integrative leadership. Each of these leadership styles contributes significantly to different aspects of school improvement, ranging from strengthening teaching and learning processes, establishing a shared vision for change, distributing leadership responsibilities, increasing stakeholder participation, to enhancing the school's capacity to adapt to changing educational environments.

The effectiveness of educational leadership largely depends on the principal's ability to assess situational demands and integrate multiple leadership styles in a flexible manner. A rigid reliance on a single leadership approach is no longer sufficient to address the complexity of contemporary education. Therefore, school principals are expected to possess adaptive and integrative leadership capacities that enable them to perform multiple roles simultaneously, including serving as instructional leaders, change agents, facilitators of collaboration, and responsive decision-makers. Consequently, these five leadership styles form a holistic and comprehensive leadership framework that is highly relevant to supporting continuous educational quality improvement in the contemporary era.

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